**Theory of Knowledge Essay**

“That which can be asserted without evidence can be dismissed without evidence.” (Christopher Hitchens). Do you agree?

Mahomed Ali Laheria

Word Count:

The immediate knowledge issue that arises while referring to this question is ‘to what extent is Christopher Hitchens’ quote true?’ Looking at the assertion that Hitchens is making, in a completely logical manner I disagree with Hitchens to the full extent because a assertion simply can not be dismissed without being shown any evidence, in the same sense that a scientist cannot put forward his theory without any evidence whatsoever because of the fact that the human mind can not ponder upon an object without wondering where it had come from. The main points of argument that come to mind while considering the question in the Area of Knowledge would be Natural Sciences because science is formed from proof of existence of particular things and Religion because religions that believe in a god may not be able to prove scientifically that there is a god but take themselves and this whole galaxy as their solitary proof, if not, where did it come from? In Ways of Knowing, Reason as a person’s logical thinking, Emotion that guides an individual to his thinking & Sense Perception as a drive for the way an individual reasons things.

Natural Sciences can be reliable Area of Knowledge (AoK) because they work on a purely logistical system. The system is one that uses experimentation and observation to explain and describe natural phenomena, which means that a theory coming from this Area of Knowledge is based on pure results and not assertions, and assertions cannot be made without proof of evidence. In science class we learned that The Buriet Test is used to identify proteins, the test showed that if protein were present the solution would turn into a purple colour and if no protein is present then the colour of the solution stays blue. This just shows that if the solutions didn’t change colour assertions could not be made that protein is present, if a person was presented with a plain solution and asked if protein was present they wouldn’t make an assertion, instead they would want evidence to prove that protein is present in the solution. Therefore, in the same way that there is no way of knowing about the presence of protein without the Buriet Test, assertions without evidence cannot be passed without evidence.

However, it is possible to approach different assumptions using different systems of Natural Science. Taking in account theories of Homology and Molecular Biology it is possible to disprove the theory of evolution; it is possible because homology is the resemblance of structures between diverse types of animals. Arguments have been made that these similarities are evidence of one mutual ancestor. However, as pointed out by scientists in Sunderland when the concentration of red blood cells is used, while applying the concepts of homology, humans are more closely related to frogs, fish, and birds than to sheep. As far as molecular biology is concerned it adds a whole new element to homology because recent studies by Dr. Michael Denton have shown that humans are less similar to monkeys than fish. Hence it is clear that natural sciences are reliable to a certain degree.

Religion plays an important part in assertion made by Hitchens because religion is based on a system of belief and traditions. Hitchens being an atheist does not believe in god and his quote shows this because it is blatantly referring to God and his creations. Growing up in a family that has strong religious values I have been taught to believe in God’s existence, the presence of life on earth, the universe and its contents is enough proof of Gods existence in Islam. Religion is partially reliable as an Area of Knowledge because it is reliant on belief in God. There are different religions in the world, and each individual religion has their own beliefs on God. Some believe that there is no God because there is no proven evidence to show his existence; on the other hand, there are other religions that strongly believe in God and that everything happens because of God. Existence of God is based on your beliefs hence, for example; proof for the existence of God would be the universe and its contents even though we assert there is a God but have never seen him, heard him, touched him yet we still assert his existence. This shows that even without seeing a creator of an object, the fact that it is contemporary is evidence of its maker.

As a Way of Knowing, reason is based upon the logic and a persons capability to create a connection between certain things, therefore, the way a person reasons his beliefs are based on how he sees things and whether he believes it factually or with a blind passion. In Hitchens case his reasoning is different to others the same way that his beliefs are different, because of atheism Hitchens believes that there is no God but has no evidence to prove that there is none. Growing up as an atheist Hitchens reasoning and logic derived from the belief that God is non-existent. Also the fact that Hitchens has no formal training in science it makes it easier for him to proclaim that assertions without evidence can be passed without any evidence. There are different types of reasoning and based on the quote it seems as though Hitchens uses exemplar reasoning.

Another WoK would be emotion because in this case, a persons way of thinking may be linked to his emotions, what Hitchens is claiming is that if a child was told that their parents have died then they must believe it even though their bodies have not been shown to the orphaned child. Atheism could be the reason why Hitchens does not believe in a God (besides the fact that atheism doesn’t practice prayer to a God). Due to the practice of Atheism Hitchens has never had any emotion towards any God therefore allowing him to make assertions that there is none. According to Domasio’s somatic marker hypothesis we are frequently faced with making decisions that involve many conflicting and unclear options. We normally agree on which course to take by considering the options we have, and deciding which one is most advantageous to our happiness. When it is unclear which decision to make, our control over reasoning is not sufficient in expressing a response. When faced with situations like this our emotions take over. This hypothesis shows that Hitchens is more reliant on his emotions than reason because when it comes to approving an assertion without evidence a person is less likely to rely on his reasoning over his emotions towards the assertion.

Furthermore I disagree with Hitchens quote because for someone to believe something they are told without being shown any evidence is absurd because without any evidence it is impossible to determine the reliability of the assertion. Another aspect of Hitchens quote that was surprising to find out was that the quote is contradictory to itself because the quote is asserting the fact that something being asserted without evidence can be dismissed without evidence. It is important to know that Natural Sciences, Religion, Reason and Emotion play a big part in your way of believing, reasoning, and understanding things in life. When faced with obstacles these elements all play a role in your decision-making without you realizing and it is essential for a person to know their train of thought. A different view on this subject would be analyzing the language and sense perception behind it, or agreeing with the statement made because of similar beliefs.